

From the Editor:

編集者のメッセージ

EMJ at the AAS 2008. The Early Modern Japan Network will host two panels at the start of the Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Thursday, April 3, 2008, 1-6 p.m. These two programs bring together an international group of scholars to discuss two themes in early modern Japanese and East Asian literature: "Impersonating the Old, Impersonating the New: Transformations of Literati Identities in China and Japan," and "Live from Edo, It's Saturday Night: Ticklish Tales of Text, Image, and Performance in Tokugawa Japan."

Panel I: "Impersonating the Old, Impersonating the New: Transformations of Literati Identities in China and Japan"

This panel looks at the ways that the persona of the scholar transformed and was transformed by shifting intellectual landscapes in late imperial China and early modern Japan. Far from being a static category bounded by geographical borders, this persona derived its enduring attraction both from its association with prestigious aspects of early Chinese elite culture, and from a flexibility which enabled a diverse set of intellectuals to continue to return to it as late as the *_bakumatsu_* period.

To consider these transformations, **Martina Siebert** (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science) examines *pulu*, a genre of contested scholarly value that flourished from the 17th to the 19th centuries. She shows how *pulu* authors' justifications of an apparently frivolous pursuit offers insight into the ways that early modern Chinese intellectuals "impersonated" new and prestigious roles as legitimate scholars. **Angelika Messner** (Christian-Albrechts-Universitaet zu Kiel) investigates physicians in 17th century China who were involved in a process of re-creating professional identities in the context of a social system that no longer supported them. **Cheryl Crowley** (Emory) discusses the work of 18th century Japanese *_haikai_* poets associated with the Yahantei school who emulated the ideal of the Chinese scholar-poet in their efforts to claim social and cultural capital. **Matthew Fraleigh** (Brandeis) explores the close identification of the 19th century Japanese intellectual Narushima Ryuhoku with the Chinese poet Tao Yuanming, showing how the persona of the virtuous poet-recluse could

be fashioned into a symbol of political and ethical engagement well into the Meiji period, far removed from the time and place in which it originated. Discussant: Benjamin Ridgway (Valparaiso).

Panel II: Live from Edo, It's Saturday Night: Ticklish Tales of Text, Image, and Performance in Tokugawa Japan

In its open defiance of the literary, dramatic, and cultural past, early modern Japan (1600-1868) saw an increase in the incorporation of humor -- be it scatological, witty, or absurd.

It is easy to suggest that this rise in humor as a mode in numerous arts and genres may have to do with the emergence of a new and unique urban-commoner class in the ballooning city of Edo, a class who needed to let off steam by laughing at themselves as well as at the ruling elite. Scholarship has hardly explored this phenomenon in greater depth until recently, perhaps on account of the difficulty of Edo-period texts, especially their wordplay, highly topical allusions, and concealed parodies. And yet consideration of this humor allows us to understand and appreciate the popular imagination of the day and to assess the impact on the Japanese of the twenty-first century.

This moderated panel brings together scholars working on humor to explore its contours in literature, theater, and narrative arts. Talks will broach: the humor of story books (*hanashibon*); the stage and literary humor of Ichikawa Danjuro II (specifically his use of visual juxtapositions or *mitate*, and *haikai* and comic *serifu*; and the humorous tension between center and periphery in popular travel literature and comic storytelling. Papers by **Charo D'Etcheverry** (Wisconsin, Madison) "'Standing Up' to the Past: Saint Narukami's Sexy *mitate*," **Laurence R. Kominz** (Portland State) "Ichikawa Danjuro II: Writing Laughter for the Stage and for the Page," **Matthew W. Shores** (Hawai'i, Manoa) "Center and Periphery in the Humor of the Edo Period," **Zane Torretta** (Columbia) "*Hanashibon* and the City: Comic Storytelling and the Urban Imagination in Early Modern Japan," **Discussant: Adam Kern** (Harvard).

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